



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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## IMPLEMENTATION OF VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS IN THE GULF OF MEXICO REEF FISH FISHERY DELAYED 90 DAYS UNTIL MARCH 7, 2007

NOAA Fisheries Service announces a 90-day delay until March 7, 2007, in the effective date for the Gulf of Mexico reef fish vessel monitoring system (VMS) requirements\*.

The delay is necessary to (1) Allow fishermen and approved vendors time to purchase, install, and activate approved units; (2) allow red snapper individual fishing quota (IFQ) participants time to receive information about their initial share and allocation under the Gulf red snapper IFQ program, and thus evaluate their overall profitability versus overall costs of VMS; and (3) allow fishermen more time to make a reasonable business decision on renewing and/or transferring their permits.

NOAA Fisheries Service Office for Law Enforcement (OLE) would like to remind reef fish permit holders of the availability of a VMS reimbursement program for the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery. These funds will be used to reimburse vessel owners and/or operators for the purchase price of the VMS. **There are a limited amount of funds available for reimbursement. New VMS programs are being implemented around the United States after January 1, 2007, and these programs will be eligible for reimbursement**

**through the same funds. Therefore, it is important to apply for reimbursement as soon as possible. Reimbursement requests will be handled on a first-come first-serve basis.** The reimbursable expense is the purchase price of the least expensive VMS unit type-approved for the reef fish fishery. Currently, the least expensive unit costs \$3,095.

For questions about VMS units, contact the VMS Support Center (phone: 888-219-9228) or the Southeast Region OLE, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Suite 109, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701 (phone: 800-758-4833).

For questions regarding reimbursement applications, contact the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, 205 SE Spokane Street, Suite 100, Portland, Oregon 97202, phone: 503-595-3100, fax: 503-595-3232

For more information on the VMS program for the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery, please log onto <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov> and click on "vessel monitoring systems."

\*All vessels with Gulf of Mexico reef fish permits are required to have a type approved VMS unit operating onboard by this date. This new date replaces the original implementation date of December 7, 2006.